TL 246

PLC Sydney 9-10 March 1991

Fourth Draft
9.3.91

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

The Socialist International, meeting as it has been in a country which is squarely placed in the Asia-Pacific region, has given particular focus in its discussions to economic, human rights and political developments in this region.

Economic Developments

Delegates noted that recent years had seen both positive and negative developments across the political and economic spectrum in the region - a region characterised by greater economic dynamism than any other in the world but, at the same time, by both poverty and evidence of a growing gap between rich and poor in many countries. Delegates called on developed countries of the region to continue with greater generosity their programmes of development assistance, and on world and regional international financial institutions to be responsive to the needs of all developing countries without exception.

Delegates noted clear evidence of growing economic cooperation in the region and applauded, in particular, the success of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) concept. Delegates agreed that such cooperation will clearly be of significant economic benefit to all countries and peoples of the region and will ultimately contribute to the development of higher living standards and freer trade throughout the world.

Delegates noted the particular importance to the many maritime nations in the region of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and expressed strong support for more ratifications in order to bring the Convention into force.

Democracy and Human Rights

Delegates noted that there had been some encouraging democratic developments in recent years in the region - for example in the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, Bangladesh, New Caledonia and Taiwan - but there had also been significant reverses for the democratic cause.

In this respect, delegates deeply regretted the unhappy reversion to a pattern of military intervention in the democratic processes in Thailand's naional life which the recent coup represents, and called on the National Peacekeeping Council to facilitate the earliest possible return to democracy and Parliamentary Government.

Delegates deplored the refusal of the military regime in Burma to implement the results of the 1990 National Election and to facilitate the transfer of power to a democratically elected Government, and their continued represssion of the democratic opposition.

Delegates deplored the continuing damage to democratic institutions which the 1987 coups in Fiji had caused. While noting that it was now proposed to restore some measure of representative government, they condemned the undemocratic, racially based and racially biased nature of the new Constitution.

Delegates also expressed concern about continuing human rights abuses in a number of countries in the region and, in particular, the continuing stifling of free expression and association in China following the Beijing massacre in 1989. They urged all countries in the region to ratify and observe the international human rights instruments and declarations adopted by the UN and its agencies, and the ILO.

The human rights situation in East Timor continues to cause real concern. Delegates urged the government of Indonesia to fully respect the collective and individual rights of the people of East Timor and to work under the mandate of the UN Secretary General to achieve an internationally acceptable settlement of outstanding issues in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.

Security

Delegates noted the growing regional debate focussed on the desirability of developing a greater sense of common security, in which countries come to appreciate that their security is best guaranteed by developing arrangements with, not against, their neighbours. They expressed support for the growing commitment within the region to dialogue and confidence building measures, and also for the growing commitments evident in the region to the principles and practices of collective security as a necessary safeguard to accompany common security processes.

Delegates noted with concern that nuclear weapons testing continued in the South Pacific despite the unanimous opposition to it of all nations in the South Pacific Forum and the establishment by them of the South Pacific Nuclear Zone. They call on France to cease its testing programme in the spirit of the universal desire for a genuinely new world order.

Delegates expressed concern about the continuing tragic civil war in Cambodia, and called upon all involved parties and the international community generally to redouble their efforts to achieve an early, just comprehensive settlement.

Delegates expressed their support for the UN Peace Plan initiated by Australia and now supported by the UN Security Council and General Assembly, which provides in particular for:

- a major UN role in the administration of Cambodia in the transitional period leading to free and fair elections;

- the cessation of all external arms supplies;

- international guarantees for the country's independence and neutrality.

Delegates further expressed their support for the early reconvening of the Paris International Conference on Cambodia, under the joint chairmanship of France and Indonesia, to allow the final negotiation of a comprehensive settlement based on the UN Peace Plan.

Delegates also called on the international community to respond with quick and generous support for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia in the wake of such a settlement.

Delegates noted the important role that regional countries had to play in the final resolution of the Cambodian problem. They noted the importance of Vietnam in particular being encouraged by the international community to act constructively and positively, and not unnecessarily isolated in its own struggle to achieve viable independence.

Delegates agreed that growing cohesiveness and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region represented a historic opportunity both for the peoples of the region and also for the entire global community to achieve higher living standards together with a more deeply entrenched commitment to democracy, equity and fundamental human rights.